

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

REPORT

COUNTRY USSR

DATE DISTR19 July 1948

SUBJECT Aralsulfat Combine in the Kzyl-Orda
Oblast of the Kazakh SSR

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION FOR THE RESEARCH
USE OF TRAINED INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS

1. The Aralsulfat combine is located in the Kzyl-Orda (East) of the Kazakh SSR, on the shores of the Aral Sea. The nearest railway station is Aralskoe More (Aral Sea) on the Gzyslor Railway. The combine has its own railway branch, about 22kms long, connecting the combine with the Aralskoe More station. This railway branch crosses the workings of the combine situated near the shores of the Aral Sea.
2. The aralsulfat combine produces sulphate for glass factories throughout the USSR, and is controlled by the Soyuz Steklo-Syr'ye Trust (Union Glass Raw Materials) of the Central Directorate for the Glass Industry under the Ministry for the Building Materials Industry of the USSR. In view of a planned increase in the production of sulphate at the combine for 1948 and the inadequacy of its own equipment for drying the lakes, a special brigade of the Soyuzstroï Gidro-Mekhanizatsiya (Union Hydro-Mechanization Construction Trust) arrived at the combine in April 1948. It was agreed that this brigade is to pump off one million cubic meters of water during the spring and summer of 1948. The annual plan for 1947 was 110,000 tons of sulphate.
3. In 1947, the combine produced about 135,000 tons of sulphate; the annual plan was fulfilled by the middle of October 1947. Thus, 25,000 tons of sulphate were produced by the combine over and above the planned production. For accomplishing the plan two and a half months early, the combine received thanks from Gintsburg, the Minister for the Building Materials Industry, and money bonuses were issued.
4. In April 1948, the director of the combine was Novikov, and his deputy was Sokolov. The number of workmen engaged in basic production was about 2,000 men, of whom about half were in the so-called special contingent. The above figure does not include personnel of the Capital Construction (building) section of the aralsulfat combine. The number of men in the special contingent increased in January 1948 and reached about 1,000 men by April 1948, and further arrivals are expected. 600,000 rubles were allocated to construct camps for the newly arrived special contingent. Installation of these new camps started in January 1948. Living conditions for personnel at the combine are difficult and most of the workers wish to transfer to some other work elsewhere.

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5. The workings of the combine consist of dried lakes, usually of small size (thernadite, i.e. sodium sulphate, lakes). Special equipment is available for drying up these lakes, pumps, motors for their operation, asbestos and concrete pipes. Sulphate deposits near the Aral Sea are enormous. In the near future, it is intended to start special treatment of astrakanites to obtain a product with a high content of sulphate. The deposits of astrakanites in this area are also enormous. Aral sulphate is not of a homogeneous nature in aspect or chemical composition. It occurs in large lumps of large transparent crystals, or in the form of a soft grey mass with a small quantity of large or small crystals. Chemical composition is also varied.

a) Sulphate in large lumps is generally composed as follows:

Na_2SO_4	-	88%
CaSO_4	-	2%
MgSO_4	-	9%
NaCl	-	0.9%

and the remainder is composed of insoluble admixtures, sand, gravel, etc. The above is only an example, as there may be a number of other chemical variations in this lump sulphate.

b) Sulphate occurring in a soft grey mass with a small number of large crystals is generally composed as follows:

Na_2SO_4	-	80%
CaSO_4	-	12%
MgSO_4	-	2%
NaCl	-	4%
admixtures about	-	2%

c) Sulphate mass with a small number of small crystals:

Na_2SO_4	-	82%
CaSO_4	-	7%
MgSO_4	-	3%
NaCl	-	5%
admixtures	-	remainder.

d) Sulphate dispatched by the combine to various factories has a varied content of moisture, generally varying between 15% and 30% (the maximum content of moisture in sulphate was about 45%). Factories themselves take steps to dry sulphate either by mechanical methods (in drums or furnaces) or by chemical methods, by means of an admixture of soda ash.

6. a. Sulphate from the combine is dispatched in route trains (marshrut), usually composed of about 50 cars, containing an average 20-25 tons each. However, small consignments are also dispatched occasionally and consist of ten to fifteen carloads. During the summer months of 1947, about 500 cars were dispatched monthly. In January 1948, consignments were dispatched almost daily and on some days about 50 cars were sent.

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b. Factories supplied with sulphate by the combine are estimated at about a hundred, including factories under the Ministry for the Building Materials Industry and factories controlled by other ministries. Among the factories supplied are the following:

Avtesteklo (Motor Glass) Factory, Anzhero-Sudzhensk Factory, Gusev Factory, Lisichansk Factory Proletarii, Krasnounsolsk Factory, Gomel Factory, Lvov Mechanical Glass Factory, Kaluga Glass Factory, Voronezh Factory, Erevan Factory, Riga Factory Sarkandaugava.

It may be of interest to note that the mechanical glass factory at Ulan-Ude, which should receive Selenga sulphate, actually receives only 10% of Selenga sulphate and 90% of Aral sulphate.

7. a. The quality of sulphate produced by the combine may on the whole be regarded as satisfactory. For the determination of the quality of the sulphate, its moisture content, various extraneous admixtures, etc., the combine has a well-equipped laboratory which carries out all tests. In 1947, the combine received a number of serious complaints from various glass factories (from the Konstantinovskii Factory, the Krasnounsolsk Factory) that the sulphate received was of low quality and had a high content of magnesium sulfide (at the combine, magnesium sulfide, sernistyl magnii, is called astrakanite). The consignments were not accepted and were not paid for. The Minister for the Building Materials Industry sent a severe reprimand to the factory director, Novikov. An investigation was made and, as a result, the chief of the laboratory was removed from his post and the shipments of sulphate from the combine were temporarily stopped.
- b. In 1947, a party of the Geologo-Razvedka (Geological Prospecting), the so-called Aralskaya Partiya (Aral Party), with geologist Grokhovski at the head, arrived at the combine. This party started studying possibilities of expanding the production of sulphate at the combine. In the middle of October 1947, a conference of the Technical Council of the Ministry for the Building Materials Industry took place in Moscow. This conference was devoted to the consideration of the question of prospects of development of the Aralsulfat combine; and director of the combine, Novikov, was specially summoned to the conference. The conference sanctioned further expansion of the Aralsulfat combine. The sum of eight million rubles was allocated for capital construction work for 1948. It was planned to increase the number of workmen by employment of special contingents. Measures for mechanizing work were also discussed, mainly in connection with the production of sulphate and its loading onto trucks. Apart from the complete overhaul of the railway branch of the combine, it was decided to build a few more kilometers of new railway lines. It was also planned to install at the combine a plant for the recrystallization of mirabilite. Results of the conference became evident at the combine at the beginning of 1948: the establishment of the Capital Construction Section was increased and various construction work was begun. At present, the combine is building large stores for sulphate, housing for the personnel of the combine, and new camps for the special contingents. New machinery for the collection of sulphate is arriving, and a brigade of the Hydro-Mechanization Trust has arrived for drying lakes, etc.

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